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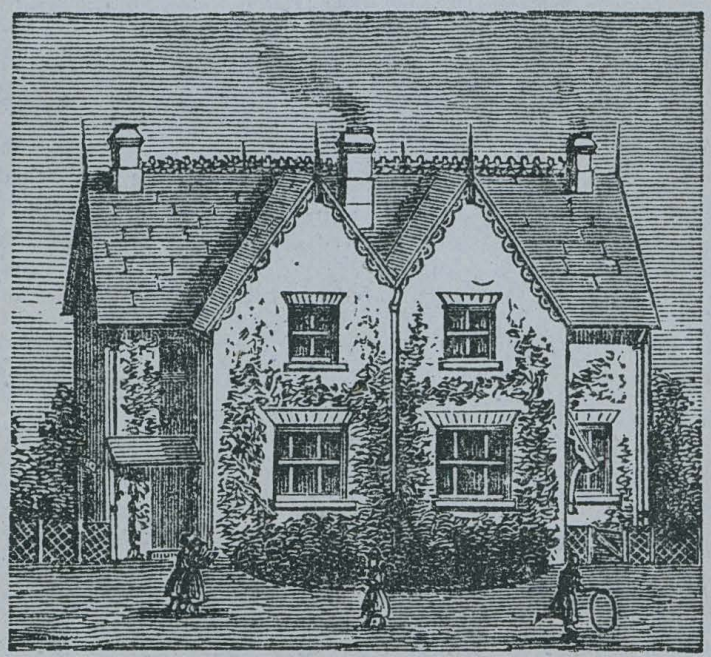
KIDNAPPED!

A Narrative of Fact.

BY

T. J. BARNARDO, F.R.C.S.Ed.



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KIDNAPPED!

A NARRATIVE OF FACT.

By T. J. Barnardo, F.R.C.S.Ed.

LATE one evening of a dull November day I was in the neighbourhood of Drury Lane, engaged in making some purchases from a naturalist's shop in a narrow street adjacent. It was a wet evening, cold, bleak, and very disagreeable. The rain kept pouring down unceasingly. The street was empty as I entered it; and, waiting in the shop while the person who served me went to prepare my purchase, I

made my way toward the door and looked out. Next door was a pudding shop—one of those cheap eating-houses frequently seen in poor neighbourhoods. In the front part of the window were two tin spouts, from which came up jets of steam, and behind these were arranged several dishes containing hot puddings—a very pleasant sight for hungry street children, who are not over-fastidious, and who in fine weather may be seen at all hours of the day surveying with eager wonder the gastronomic display.

However, the rain had, I suppose, on this occasion, driven most of the children from the place; for as I looked up and down the narrow street I saw only two. These were little mites of girls, who, with their faces and noses flattened against the glass, surveyed with eager glances the smoking viands displayed within. The rain was soaking them through and through, but they heeded it not. There they stood, apparently too hungry and too interested to mind such a trifle as a severe wetting.

I beckoned to my friend the naturalist, who was preparing the specimens I wanted.

"Just come here." He came to the door. "See," I said, "these poor little creatures out on such a night exposed to this weather. They look as if they could eat up everything in that window."

"Ah!" he replied, "that's very usual here. We have always a lot of that sort about that window. But these are very bad, I admit."

Even he, accustomed as he was to observe crowds of poor waifs about, thought that these looked exceptionally wretched. They appeared to have on but one poor garment each, tied to them anyhow, and were without other protection from the rain, which continued to pour steadily down; yet, as I have said, they never heeded it, though it saturated them.

"Do you know who they are?" I inquired.

"No," he replied; "but I suspect they are some of Mother Brown's lot."

"Really!" said I, "and who is she?"

"Nobody knows who she is exactly; but she is not up to any good."

"Just tell me something about her," I urged. Then I learned that there was a woman in the neighbourhood, an aged person, called "Mother Brown," who was in the habit of taking, of course for a consideration, children from persons anxious to dispose of them, and these were kept by her for a season. They were afterwards hired out, some to acrobats, some to street-singers or beggars, some for the stage, and some even for artists' models, as the case might be.

I had long been familiar with the sad fact that a dreadful traffic in child life was being carried on in certain parts of London, and as I listened to Mr. H——'s story I understood at once that this Mother Brown was one of those wretched agents who obtained a living by this means, and yet managed to evade the law. There had been, I was told, a good deal of excitement in the neighbourhood two or three times over Mother Brown, and the

neighbours had treated her rather roughly. My informant added that she was very shy now of any advances. He continued, "I think it is probable these two belong to her, for generally the very worst and poorest come from her."

So I stepped outside, and, touching the older of the two girls on the shoulder, observed quietly, "That's nice pudding, isn't it?"

She looked up and nodded at me.

"Would you like to have some?" I asked. A quick glance of pleasure accompanied the nod this time; not many words, for your true street child does not say much in replying to questions like these; but it was a nod and a look that meant a great deal. So I said, "Come inside."

Addressing the man who was cutting the pudding, I asked him to give each child a helping. He cut a largish slice, put a cabbage leaf on his hand, placed the pudding on the top of that, and then a fresh piece of leaf over that, and so handed a sandwich to each girl.

Standing by the table, alternately blowing and nibbling at the smoking mess, my hungry little guests soon made the pudding disappear.

I was rather alarmed as to the results which might follow so hasty a meal of so doubtful a character; but as their eyes still looked hungrily at the steaming dish, I asked with some hesitation, "Would you like to have some more?" They nodded their heads quickly enough again. I was afraid of a whole slice this time, so prudently gave them each only half of one.

After a little while I said to the elder child, doubtfully—she looked to me about seven and the other about five—the merest infants—"Would you like some more?"

"Yes," she said.

"I think you had better not."

But, oh, she wanted some badly, she said, "for Tommy."

"Who is Tommy?"

"Brother'

"Where is your brother?"

"Sick."

Just one word constituted her whole answer to each question.

"Is he very sick?"

"Yes."

"Do you want to take some pudding away for him?"

"Yes."

I had some cut, and gave it to her for Tommy. "Now," I said, "I want to go with you to see Tommy."

"Oh, you mustn't," she replied, quickly; "Grannie doesn't want you."

"And who is Grannie? How do you know she does not?"

"Oh, I know she doesn't," with a wise shake of her head.

"But is she your own grandmother?"

"No, she ain't really; but we calls her Grannie."

"Oh," I said, "is it Mother Brown?"

She nodded quickly, looking up at me, and opening her eyes very wide.

"Well, I will go and see Tommy." She still looked more than doubtful as to the experiment, and said she did not think her Grannie would let me in; but I answered, "Do you know I am a doctor, and if I go to see Tommy, perhaps I may do him good, as he is ill." That seemed to settle her doubts, and away we went together.

I will not attempt to describe the miserable den in which they all lived; suffice it to say it was below the level of the street. There, in a kind of underground kitchen, the floor of earth, and lying in a corner upon just a heap of rags of some kind, I saw, as soon as my eyes became accustomed to the gloom, the little wasted form of the sick boy.* An old woman was crouching over some embers on the hearth, smoking a pipe. She had half risen, growling at me, when I came in, but soon

* If any one thinks this picture overdrawn, let him read not merely the Report of the Royal Commission on the Housing of the Working Classes, but the volume of *evidence* upon which that Report is based.

resumed her crouching attitude. I said, "I hear you have a sick boy here ; I am a medical man, and I want to see him." I suppose she imagined from the way I spoke that I was a man in authority, perhaps the parish doctor, so she made no objection. I knelt down by the side of the poor boy, and took his little hot, thin hand in mine. The child was worn to a skeleton, having suffered a long time from hip-joint disease. Well I knew that such a patient needed everything that comfort and kind care and means could give him, but here he had nothing—literally nothing.

After making a careful examination, by the aid of an inch of candle in a bottle, I asked the woman, "Would you not like to have him taken to the hospital? I can get him admitted if you wish. Shall I obtain a ticket for the Charing Cross Hospital, and bring it down to you to-morrow?" Yes, she would be thankful. It was clear she was anxious to get rid of *him;* he was only a trouble to her.

I thought that was a good beginning, and hoped somehow to save the girls also if I could but find a way. So I left the place promising to call on the morrow; but ere I went out, I gave the woman a little money to get at once some needful things for the poor boy. I feared she would not spend it on the child—nay, I was almost certain she would spend it for her own purposes,—but still I felt that the gift might, perhaps, facilitate my getting access to them all again, and who could tell what might come of it?

I went away homeward; but all the way eastward that poor suffering child's wan and pinched face seemed to haunt me. I could not forget the pressure of the little hot, thin hand, nor could I forget the faces and forms of those two little girls standing there in their wet clothing, and scarcely daring to look at the woman for fear of being beaten. This will never do, I thought; I *must* go back! Why had I not offered to admit the boy without delay into our own Hospital Infirmary in

Stepney? I had at Stepney a small infirmary for sick children, to which I might have brought the child then and there, instead of leaving him another night in that wretched den, but I feared at the time that the long journey would be too much for him.

I felt so unhappy now about the poor child, that I could not leave it till the morrow; so I engaged a cab forthwith, and drove right back about nine o'clock in the evening, resolving to take him away at once if I could. When I reached the miserable den there was nobody there except the children; the old woman had evidently gone out to drink away my money, and might not be in, the girls hesitatingly told me, for a long time.

I had desired the cabman to wait for me at the top of the street. I now said to the boy, "Wouldn't you like to get quickly into a nice soft bed, and be kindly cared for, and have this poor leg made well?" Oh, yes, he *would* like it very much. "Then shall I take you away with me now in my cab?" A touching look

of patient submission and helpless gratitude came over his face much akin to the dumb thankfulness which I had once seen in the eyes of a dog relieved from pain. Its very silence smote me with a consciousness of what he must have already borne; there was such self-restraint, such wonderful control in his poor wan face and sad eyes that my own eyes filled with hot tears as I looked at him.

"Patient children!—think what pain
Makes a young child patient—ponder!
Wronged too commonly to strain
After right, or wish, or wonder."

I spoke to the other children about it. They were afraid "Grannie would beat" them, but I said I was quite sure she would not; she would be glad I had taken him; and having persuaded them to trust me, I put my arms under the poor child—he was not a heavy weight—and took him right away to the cab, the sisters following by my side. I had got him safely into the cab, and the two little girls had kissed him and were about to return,

when the thought came to me in a moment, as if by inspiration, "Why should I not, now I had the chance, TAKE AWAY ALL THREE AT ONCE?" The old woman was not here now, and it would save a great deal of difficulty in the future if I were to act promptly. Perhaps I might never again have such an opportunity.

I turned to the little girls and said, "Children, will you come too?" They would like to, that was evident, but they drew back timorously. No, they were afraid of Grannie.

"You need not be afraid," I assured them. "Grannie cannot even find you out; she will never know where you are. I will take you right away down to the country, and take care of you."

Very little persuasion sufficed to effect my purpose. In a few moments I had all three safe in the cab; the door was shut, and away we went, interrupted only by the groans of my little patient and the sobs of the frightened sisters. Ah me! how true I then felt it that—

". . . The child's sob in the silence curses deeper
Than the strong man in his wrath!"

When we reached Stepney, I put my little patient in the Infirmary, and after awhile sent the two girls down to our happy Home then just being opened at Ilford. To cut a long story short, in about seven or eight months the poor boy died. There had been very little hope of him when admitted; but I had at least the comfort of knowing that the sufferings of his last moments were alleviated by all that kind attention and loving care from Christian nurses and doctors could do. The little girls, meanwhile, were doing well down in our Ilford Home, and I congratulated myself a thousand times on the success which seemed to follow the course I had taken.

Just then, however, I noticed in the daily papers that a woman had appeared before the Bow Street magistrates, expressing difficulty as to the custody of a little child that had been left on her hands by its mother. The workhouse

refused to receive it, and she did not know how to act. The magistrate advised her to apply to some Home. I saw the case, and being desirous of knowing more of the facts, went up myself to Bow Street, and asked the warrant officer where this woman lived, in the hope of finding her out.

After learning all I could from the officer, I left the police-station, and had just turned the corner of the street, when whom should I come upon, face to face, but old Mother Brown! It was not a very pleasant position to be in, I can assure my readers. In fact, I have seldom been more alarmed in my life. Needless to say, she "went for me" at once; she howled and made a dreadful row, calling me a robber and a villain, and all kinds of dreadful names. In that neighbourhood it does not take very many minutes to attract a crowd, and such a crowd was soon surging around me before I could get away—a noisy crowd of rough men and, if possible, rougher women. One cried out, "Give it him, old gal!"

another declared, "I will back the old woman!" and all were ready to illustrate their advice by action.

It was a very embarrassing situation to be in. I looked every way, but saw no policeman; and meanwhile the crowd grew in density each moment. I have, however, always found that in the very worst crowds there is a sympathetic chord somewhere which may be touched; and if you can but handle them aright, ere long you will win even the roughest over to your side. So as soon as there was a lull in the storm of shouting and vociferation, I cried out, "My name is Barnardo, and I come from the Homes for Poor Children, in Stepney. As to this woman——" and I tried to describe who and what she was. But I was interrupted in a very pleasant manner by the loudly expressed murmur of sympathy which went up from the crowd. I have received during many years most kind expressions of interest and goodwill towards our work from all sorts and conditions of men—from the highest in the

land and from the gentlest; but never in all my life did I receive a more satisfactory proof that God had given my work and myself, for my work's sake, favour in the eyes of men, than in that rough crowd that day.

The very moment they heard my name there was a murmur of respectful sympathy, and every instinct of opposition was stilled at once, while they seemed ready to listen with interest to my statement. "Now," I continued, "as to this woman here. Her neighbours call her old Mother Brown. She gets hold of children—how, nobody knows—she keeps them together in a wretched underground kitchen; she half starves them, treats them badly in other ways, and it is more than suspected that she sells or hires them out. I found three children with her, one of whom was seriously ill, and I took them away. It is for this cause she has attacked me. But don't you think I did right?" And the crowd, who were now won over completely to my side, shouted, "Yes! Bravo!" I looked around,

but old Mother Brown had mysteriously disappeared, thinking, I suppose, that discretion was, in this instance, the better part of valour.

From that time, however, I became very uneasy about the little girls. I had mentioned my name and the name of the Homes aloud, and I felt sure the wretched woman would be hovering about our place, as others had done before, and some day or other, when she had the chance, these little girls might be forced back again under her evil influences. I was, therefore, as may be imagined, a good deal disturbed in mind. The worst difficulties I have to contend with are often those which arise from a child's relatives or connections, when such are vicious or criminal. Many boys and girls become well off in life, so to speak, when they are completely orphaned or left quite friendless, for then they have some prospect of rising. But a criminal or vicious relative remains for many years a serious hindrance to the prosperity of a child, and not unfrequently retards progress altogether.

These thoughts made me so very unhappy as I reflected upon the future of these two little girls, that I considered it would be prudent to put as wide a distance between them and this wretched old woman as possible.

At that time I had no definitely planned emigration work in connection with the "Homes," except so far as sending occasional parties of children to Canada through the agency of others was concerned; and, indeed, I had not then seriously thought of emigration as a means of dealing with any large number of my rescued bairns. But I felt this case was so urgent that I sought and obtained help from a benevolent friend who had on more than one occasion taken small parties of my little ones to Canada, and these two sisters were kindly included in another party that were leaving for Quebec, under safe conduct. When they were going, I made a stipulation with the kind friend who took them in charge, that the two children, one now eight and the other six years of age, *were not to be*

separated; that they were to go together into one household, and, as far as possible, were to be allowed to grow up and to remain together. Accordingly, off they went, and I confess I was heartily glad when I knew that they were at last beyond the reach of "old Mother Brown."

Some time passed away before I had tidings of the settlement of my children. It appeared that most of the little ones who went out in the same party were easily disposed of —either for service, in the case of those who were older, or for adoption, in the case of those who were younger. Those two little girls, however, having to go *together*, remained for awhile on hand; and, when all the others were gone, they were still unclaimed.

One night there drove up to the door of the little Home a farmer's buggy, and out of it came a respectable, farmer-like man and his wife. They were dressed in mourning. At the door they asked the question, "Have you any little girls here? We hear this is a Home for Little Orphan Girls, and we want to adopt

one." They were asked inside. The woman said, "We wish to obtain a little girl about six years of age;" and then the history of their mourning attire was touchingly given. They had had one little daughter of their own. When she was six years of age they lost her, and ever since they were anxious to get another to fill the vacant place in their bereaved hearts and empty home. So the good friend in charge of the Home said, "I have two children left, sisters—one six and the other eight years of age. I cannot let one go without the other; but if you like to come in you can see them."

They entered the room, and the two little children were called down. The moment the woman saw the younger, she looked at her with a hungry, wistful glance, and, seizing her in a tight embrace, carried her off into a distant corner, where she seemed busied with her for awhile. The older drew near to the farmer, and was presently perched on his knee, while he chatted with her as only a kind-hearted

man can do with a little child. By-and-by the woman came up with the little child in her arms, while the tears poured down her face as she said, in a low voice, "Oh, Alec, *they'll fit—they'll fit!*"

What could she mean by that? Oh the sacred mystery of a mother's love! Who has fully sounded all its depths? The poor soul had brought away from a certain sacred little chest in her own home a pair of tiny shoes and a pair of little socks, which belonged to the dear child that was gone. She produced these from her pocket, and had taken the wee maiden into the corner to try them on her. The mere fact that they *fitted exactly* seemed almost a sufficient proof to her that this was the very child the Lord wished her to take care of; so she declared she must take this little one. Indeed, it seemed as though she could not let her out of her sight, even for a moment. The farmer, on the other hand, had his arm round the older child, and was loth to part with her; so there and then they decided to

accept the joint charge of both, and to adopt and bring them up as their own children! Thus a home was found for these two little girl-waifs kidnapped by me from that wretched den in Drury Lane, where only the saddest fate lay before them. Now they were placed in a happy home, under kind, Christian people, where the prospects of their future were as bright as they could well be.

At present I must not say more about this particular case which, I am free to admit, is an exceptional one in many of its aspects, but none the less it illustrates fairly and very truly much of the blessed work of child-rescue to which these "Homes" have been devoted for so many years. Altogether 6,829 poor boys and girls have been saved by our "Homes" from the evils of a street life, from the dangers attending orphanhood, and from the perils of an unprotected condition. Of these 1,608 have already been placed out in Canadian homes, or with kind employers in Australia and South Africa, and are thereby far removed

from the perils amid which their childhood had been cast. Surely such a work of rescue is of NATIONAL importance, and should appeal to every Christian citizen for support. For not only are the poor children themselves saved untold misery and wretchedness, but our own beloved land is greatly benefited by their emigration, being thereby relieved of some of its surplus population from among that very class where the struggle for existence is fiercest, whilst the colonies receive a rich stream of young blood which in the days to come will doubtless constitute their greatest wealth.

Yet there are still hundreds and thousands of unfortunate children in London, and, indeed, in all our great cities, who need the succour which Christ's Church can alone give, and who appeal, by their very helplessness, for relief to those who love the Friend of little children. What reply will the reader of these pages give to this cry of the children ?

"Do ye hear the children weeping, O my brothers,
Ere the sorrow comes with years?"

18 TO 26, STEPNEY CAUSEWAY, LONDON, E.

"Dr. Barnardo's Homes for Destitute Boys & Girls."

President—The Most Hon. the MARQUIS OF LORNE, P.C., K.T.
Vice-President—The Right Hon. the LORD KINNAIRD.
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THESE "Homes," besides doing a vast amount of general mission work in East London, feed, clothe, and provide a Christian and industrial training for over **1,400** poor children, and have since their formation rescued nearly **7,000** Destitute Boys and Girls.

In connection with these Institutions there are now thirty Cottage Homes for GIRLS, forming a Village upon *the family system*, at Ilford, Essex; a Home for LITTLE BOYS at Jersey, a House for BABIES at Hawkhurst, Kent, and three large Homes for BOYS and GIRLS in the East of London. There is also in operation a Hospital for SICK CHILDREN, containing thirty-one beds, under skilful professional care; and a Hotel for YOUNG WORKMEN who have left the Homes; whilst a Labour House for DESTITUTE YOUTHS too old to enter the Boys' Home, and a Servants' Home for OLDER GIRLS, have recently been added. An EMIGRATION DEPARTMENT and Distributing Home, Peterboro', Ontario, Canada, is also in operation.

These "Homes" present some special features which distinguish them from all others in the Metropolis, not the least remarkable being that poor children are sought for by day and night in the Lodging Houses and other miserable haunts of the homeless poor.

Really Destitute Children *are always eligible*, and may be sent to the Office at any hour of the day or night. Other cases not so urgent are, if brought under notice, carefully inquired into, and decided upon as speedily as possible.

Children are admitted irrespective of differences of age, sex, or creed, and in spite of physical disqualifications that frequently lead to their being rejected elsewhere.

No voting or promise of money payment is ever required to obtain admission for a suitable, *i.e.* a destitute, case. *There is no endowment, and the whole work is dependent solely upon the free-will offerings of the benevolent.*

The "Homes" are always open to visitors, except on Saturday afternoon and Sunday; but the best time to see the Stepney Home is between 2.30 and 5 p.m., when the workshops and schools are in operation. The Girls' Village can be reached by train from Liverpool Street Station to Ilford, starting at 1.5 p.m. daily.

All communications should be addressed to
DR. T. J. BARNARDO, 18 to 26, Stepney Causeway, London, E.

NOTE TO THE READER.

As many into whose hands this little book will come may desire to assist the Institutions in the continuance of their good work among HOMELESS CHILDREN, a few practical suggestions are here added as to *how* help may be offered.

£16 will support a *healthy* child for a whole year in any of our LONDON HOMES;

£15 will keep a *sick boy or girl* in our Children's Infirmary or at a seaside CONVALESCENT HOME for six months;

£8 10s. will pay for the complete outfit and passage money of any little one EMIGRATED, for prudential reasons, to our BRANCH HOMES in the Colonies;

£10 will maintain a child for a whole year in our LITTLE BOYS' HOME, Jersey;

£5 will APPRENTICE a child (disqualified perhaps by physical infirmity for ordinary pursuits) to some useful trade;

£1 10s. will provide means by which 100 homeless children can be gathered from the lodging houses and the streets to a SUPPER, at which the most needy may be selected for the permanent benefits of the Institutions;

£8 will give a homeless child all the benefits of the Institutions for SIX MONTHS;

£1 6s. 8d. will do the same for A MONTH, or 6*s.* for a week.

All communications should be addressed to The *Treasurer*, Wm. Fowler, Esq., M.P.; or to The *Director*, Dr. T. J. Barnardo, 18 to 26, Stepney Causeway, London, E. Post Office Orders should be made payable *only* at the G.P.O., and, *as well as cheques, should be crossed* London and South-Western Bank, Bow Branch.

Copies of this little book, for gratuitous distribution only, can be obtained at half price, from the office of the Institutions, 18 to 26, Stepney Causeway, London, E.

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